

Spring is a favorite time of year for many. We come out of the winter doldrums, we get over our cabin fever rather quickly, and the tulips, rhubarb and grass all spring to life once again along with the dandelions. And in early April all the baseball teams are tied for first place. I think that's where the line 'Hope Springs Eternal' came to being. We all hope the Twins do well and in the early spring we can keep those good thoughts until they're mathematically eliminated by the end of June.



Eric Veglahn pitched for the LaCrescent Lancers and struck out 5 batters in one inning. Photo courtesy of the Winona Daily News

Speaking of baseball, I saw an article recently that mentioned a baseball player named Eric Veglahn, who was recently re-signed by the St Paul Saints. The same article mentioned that he holds the Minnesota High School record for strikeouts in one inning, five when he pitched for LaCrescent High School in 2012. In fact, according to Deadspin, the feat of five strikeouts in a half inning appears to have been achieved only three times in the minor leagues and only once in the majors during a spring training game.

What if I told you West Concord was involved in a high school game that saw six strikeouts in one inning. I saw it happen and was in the lineup that day. It was the spring of 1969 when the West Concord Cardinals traveled to Claremont to take on the Parrots in a Wasioja conference matchup.



Craig Busch struck out 6 batters in one inning in a Minnesota high school game in 1969 against West Concord. It's an unofficial record until some documentation can be found. Craig pitched for the Claremont Parrots.

The starting pitcher for the Parrots that day was senior Craig Busch. Craig was a very good pitcher with a hard fastball and a slider that broke like it was deflected by a hockey stick. The catcher that day for Claremont was Mike Berg, who today farms near Claremont. In the top of the first inning, the Cardinals sent up some good hitters including Mike Bjerke, Mike Doty and Mark Fellows. But Busch was really on his game early and he was, to put it in baseball vernacular, throwing bbs. The fastball had good movement on it but the slider was unhittable. For Berg, it was uncatchable too.

One by one, the Cardinal batters would swing and miss while three different times, Berg would catch and miss. For those of you who don't know the baseball rules, when a catcher misses a third strike, the batter has the opportunity to run to first base. Well the Cards loaded the bases and no one had hit the ball. It was hard to hit something you couldn't see. I was seventh in the lineup that day, so I had a front row seat. I was hoping to get up with the bases loaded but I was also nervous to face a pitcher like Busch. Well the inning ended with me on deck and the bases were left loaded and Craig Busch had struck out six batters in that first half inning.

We all casually talked about it and noted the six strikeouts. But I don't remember anyone talking about a record, not even our coach David Lueck. And that's one reason why I don't think it's mentioned in any record books. And with each passing year, it gets harder to find any written proof that shows the record. Old scorebooks or a newspaper clipping from either the WC Enterprise or the Claremont News are hard to come by. I'm not sure where Mr. Lueck is today. The Claremont coach that day in 1969 was John Burkhartzmeyer and the last I knew he was in Faribault. West Concord ended up winning the game that day as Busch must have tired striking out so many. I neglected to mention that as leadoff batter in the second, I proceeded to strike out as well.

I will continue my quest to find some written proof that it indeed happened but I know what I saw that day. It was a record that should be in the annals of Minnesota and U.S. baseball history. Busch went on to pitch semi-pro baseball. He played with the Owatonna Aces from the time he graduated Claremont High School in 1969 until 1993. He was an ace that day in 1969 for sure. Craig passed away at the age of 65 in October, 2016. He was a good athlete and a good person and in my mind a record holder.

Below is the picture of the 1969 West Concord baseball team.

From left to right in front row: Roger Ellingson, Mike Bjerke, Neil Eayers, Ed Dohrmann, Rob 'The Beav' Henry. Back row: Coach David Lueck, Mike Doty, Mark Fellows, Richard Hughes, Emery Kleven, Grant Ness, Steve Frederick, Ed Gillard, Wayne Miller, Manager Mike Sorn.

